

The Church and the Rise of Cities

Prepare to Read

Objectives

In this section you will

1. Learn why the Roman Catholic Church was so important and powerful during the Middle Ages.
2. Discover the connection between an increase in trade and the growth of towns.
3. Find out what life was like in a medieval town.
4. Understand the role of culture and learning in the Middle Ages.

Taking Notes

As you read this section, think about what caused towns to grow in the Middle Ages and the effects of this growth. Copy the diagram below and record your findings in it.



Target Reading Skill

Identify Sequence

Noting the order in which significant events occur can help you understand and remember them. You can track the order of events by making a list. Then use signal words and dates in the text to make sure your events are listed in the correct order.

Key Terms

- **clergy** (KLUR jee) *n.* persons with authority to perform religious services
- **excommunication** (eks kuh myoo nih KAY shun) *n.* expelling someone from the Church
- **guild** (gild) *n.* a medieval organization of crafts workers or tradespeople
- **apprentice** (uh PREN tis) *n.* an unpaid person training in a craft or trade
- **chivalry** (SHIV ul ree) *n.* the code of honorable conduct for knights
- **troubadour** (TROO buh dawr) *n.* a traveling poet and musician of the Middle Ages

The cathedral at Chartres, France, still dominates the city.

Tall spires reach toward the heavens. Gorgeous stained-glass windows feature rich colors. Sculptures and carvings of people, plants, and animals seem to be everywhere. Amazing flying buttresses—masses of stonework or brickwork attached to the walls—help hold the building up. What is this building? It is a Gothic cathedral.

Even today, these huge medieval churches dominate towns in many parts of Europe. During the Middle Ages, cathedrals were built not only to glorify God but also to be a credit to their city. Entire communities worked for decades to build the biggest, tallest, most beautiful cathedral.

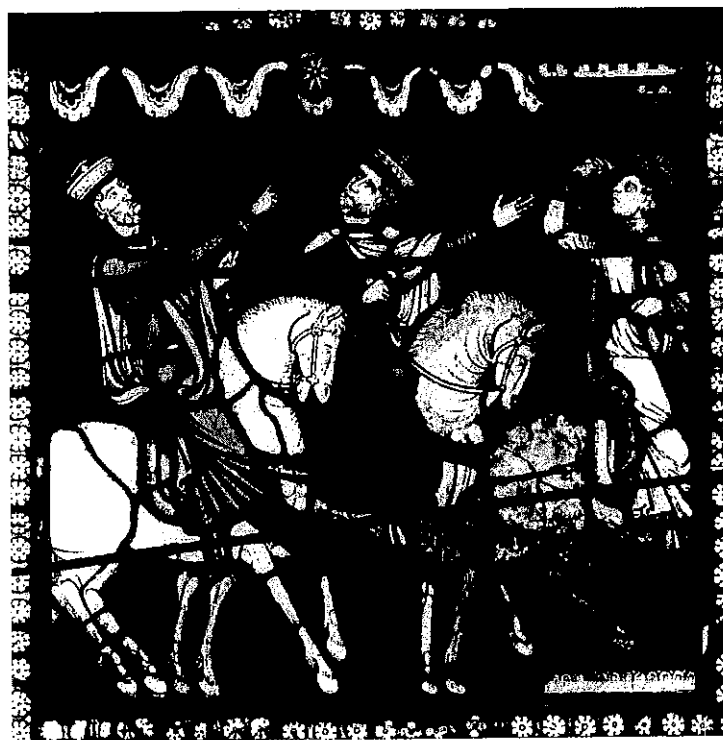
Once completed, a cathedral served as a house of worship, a gathering place, and even as a religious school. Its beautiful glass windows and sculptures told Bible stories and presented the lives of the saints to a population that could not read or write.

The Church in the Middle Ages

Most Gothic cathedrals were built in Western Europe between 1100 and 1400. *Gothic* refers to the style of architecture, as you can see in the Eyewitness Technology feature on page 404. A cathedral was the church of a bishop, an important leader of the Roman Catholic Church. During the Middle Ages, nearly all people in Western Europe were Roman Catholic. The Roman Catholic Church had so much influence that it was known simply as “the Church.” Why was the Church so powerful? There were many reasons.

Religious and Economic Power During the Middle Ages, life was short and hard for most people. They were comforted by the Christian belief that they would enjoy the rewards of heaven after death if they lived according to Church teachings. The Church also held that if people *didn't* obey those rules, they would be punished after death. The promise of reward combined with the threat of punishment made most people follow the teachings of the Church.

The Church also had great economic power. It gained great wealth by collecting taxes. It also took fiefs from lords in exchange for services performed by clergy, or persons with authority to perform religious services. In fact, the Church was the single largest owner of land in Europe during the Middle Ages.



Political Power of the Church The combination of religious and economic power enabled the Church to take on many of the roles that government performs today. It even made laws and set up courts to enforce them. People who did not obey the Church were threatened with being excommunicated. **Excommunication** means being expelled from membership in the Church and participation in Church life. This was a very serious threat. Few people would associate with someone who had been excommunicated.

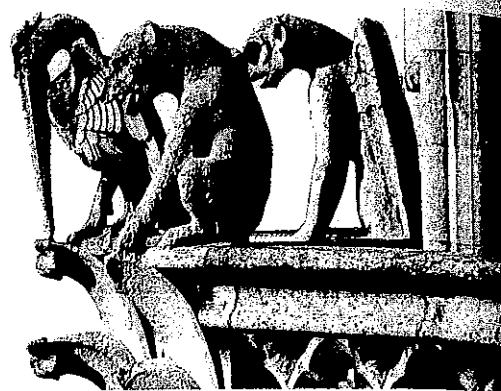
High Church officials were advisors to kings and lords. The ever-present threat of excommunication gave Church officials great influence in political matters. The Church used its authority to limit feudal warfare. It declared periods of truce, or temporary peace. That was one reason warfare began to decline during the 1100s.

Teaching Tool

This stained glass window in Canterbury Cathedral, England, shows the three kings following a star to the birth of Jesus. **Infer** How might this window have helped medieval people understand Church teachings?

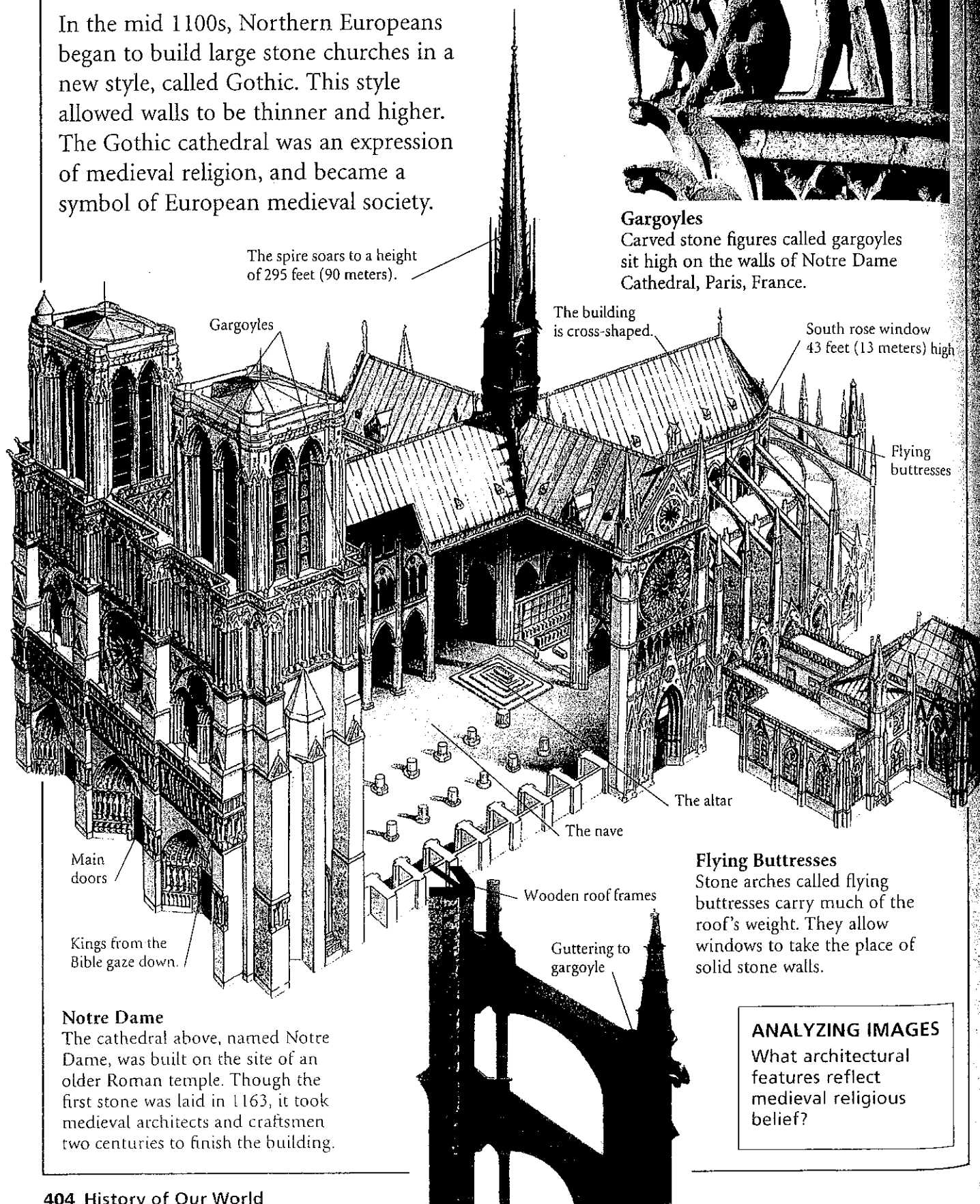
Gothic Cathedral

In the mid 1100s, Northern Europeans began to build large stone churches in a new style, called Gothic. This style allowed walls to be thinner and higher. The Gothic cathedral was an expression of medieval religion, and became a symbol of European medieval society.



Gargoyles

Carved stone figures called gargoyles sit high on the walls of Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris, France.



The spire soars to a height of 295 feet (90 meters).

Gargoyles

The building is cross-shaped.

South rose window 43 feet (13 meters) high

Flying buttresses

The altar

The nave

Main doors

Kings from the Bible gaze down.

Wooden roof frames

Guttering to gargoyle

Flying Buttresses

Stone arches called flying buttresses carry much of the roof's weight. They allow windows to take the place of solid stone walls.

Notre Dame

The cathedral above, named Notre Dame, was built on the site of an older Roman temple. Though the first stone was laid in 1163, it took medieval architects and craftsmen two centuries to finish the building.

ANALYZING IMAGES

What architectural features reflect medieval religious belief?

Church Organization The Church was highly organized. Almost every village had a priest. A bishop supervised several priests and an archbishop supervised several bishops. Finally, the archbishops were under the authority of the pope. The papacy, or government of the Church, was based in Rome. These areas of Church authority overlapped and crossed the boundaries of kingdoms. Thus, the Church had power in every kingdom, every fief, and every village.

The Church in Everyday Life The medieval Church touched nearly all aspects of life. Think of any major event—the birth of a child, a serious illness, a marriage, or a death. During the Middle Ages, the clergy were almost always in attendance to offer a blessing or to perform a service.

The clergy helped people follow Church rules about how to live. They also listened when people came to church to confess their sins. In the name of God, the clergy then forgave them for the wrongs to which they had confessed.

Monasteries and Convents Some religious men felt that they should dedicate their lives to God by living together in religious communities called monasteries. Religious women, called nuns, lived in similar communities called convents. This form of religious life is called monasticism.

These religious communities developed better ways of growing crops and tending livestock. In this way, the Church helped improve the economy of the Middle Ages, which was based mostly on farming. Monks and nuns also looked after the sick and set up schools. Monks were more educated than most people. Because they copied books from ancient times, they preserved knowledge that otherwise would have been lost. Convents gave women a rare opportunity to become educated.

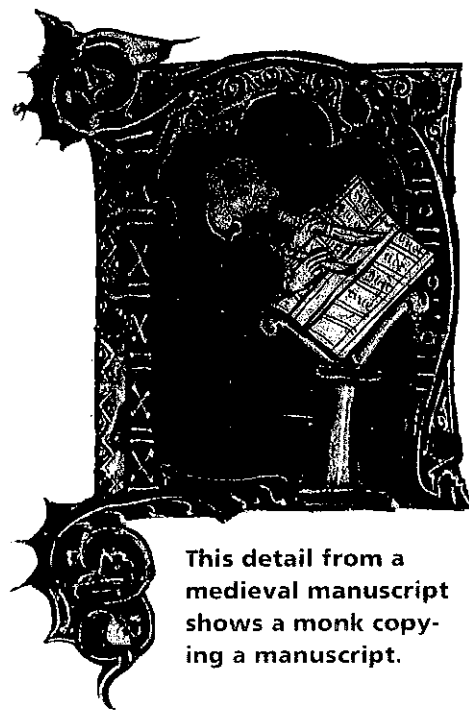
Scholasticism Some Christian scholars studied ancient Greek texts that said people should use reason to discover truth. However, the Church taught that many ideas must be accepted on faith. These medieval scholars worked out a system that tried to resolve the two philosophies. Called scholasticism, it used reason to support Christian beliefs.

Reading Check What were monasteries and convents?

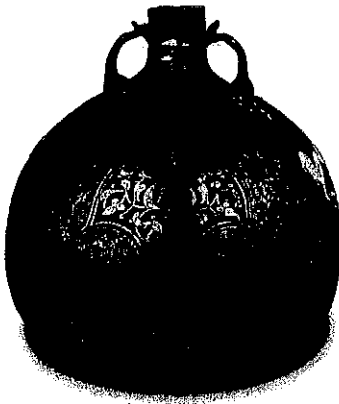


Medieval Wedding

In the Middle Ages, ceremonies such as weddings had to be performed by a priest. **Conclude** How did this requirement increase Church power?



This detail from a medieval manuscript shows a monk copying a manuscript.



This beautiful bottle from Syria, made in the 1300s, would have been a valued trade item.

Trade Revives and Towns Grow

By about A.D. 1000—the middle of the Middle Ages—feudalism was well established in Europe and the Church was a stabilizing force. Europe was becoming a safer place, and the population was growing.

The Revival of Trade As people felt safer, they began to travel more and learn more about distant places. As you will read in Section 3, the crusaders brought many desirable goods back from Asia. Europeans began to demand such things as spices and cloth that they could get only from Africa and Asia. Ancient trade routes came into use again. European merchants traveled abroad to buy and sell valued goods.

The Growth of Towns At first, local goods were traded in the markets of small villages. As trade grew, so did these markets. Some developed into major trade fairs. You can find these market towns on the map below.

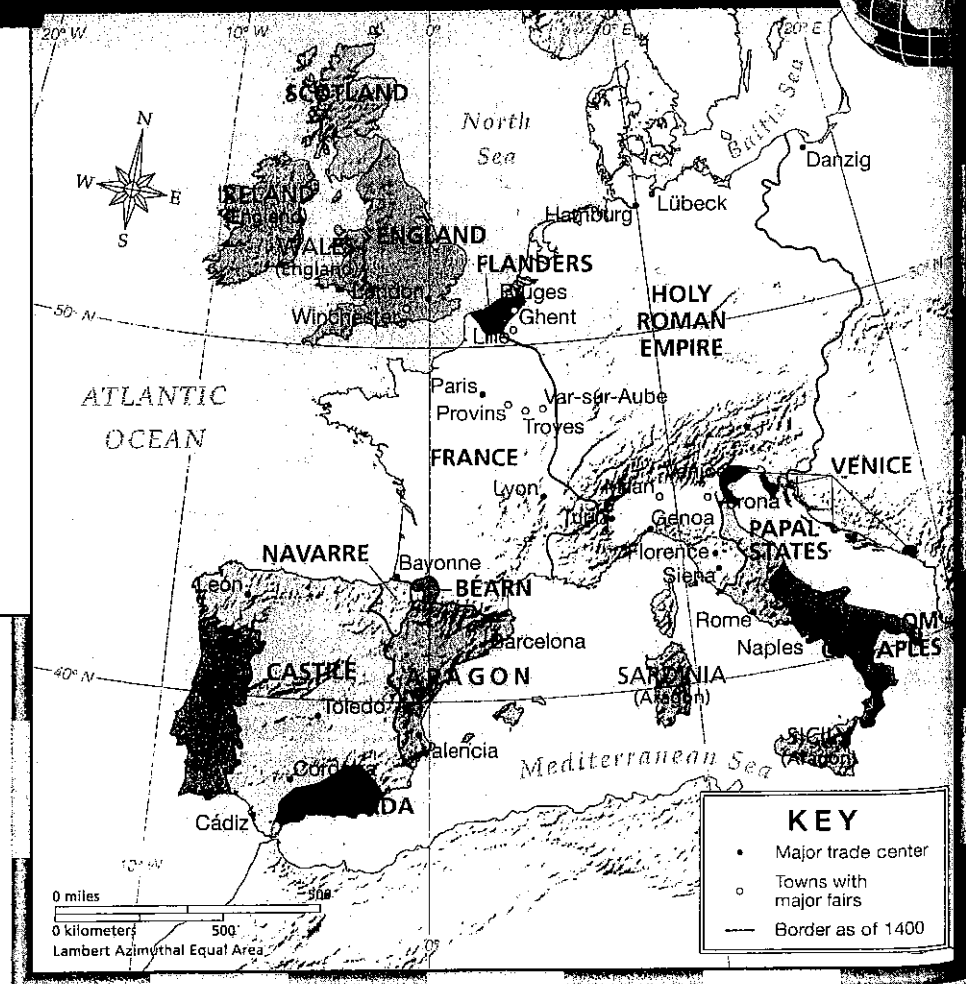
MAP MASTER™ Skills Activity

Movement As trade increased, towns along major trade routes held trade fairs and became important business centers. **Identify** Name the major trade centers of Castile. Name French towns with trade fairs. **Infer** Why do you think places such as Valencia, Naples, and Rome became important trade centers?

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Trade Centers in Europe



Traders also gathered at convenient places for travelers, such as river crossings and along highways. They chose important monasteries and fortified places built by nobles. Before long, towns developed in these locations, too.

As trade grew, so did Europe's medieval towns and cities. The possibility of a better life and freedom from serfdom drew many people to the new, growing towns. The growth of these towns' population further increased their prosperity and trade.

✓ **Reading Check** Why did towns begin to grow?



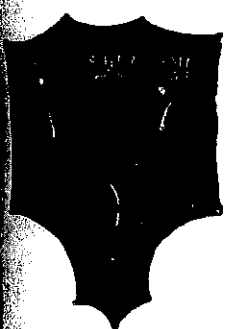
Shops in a Paris Street

Notice the many kinds of shops in Paris in the early 1500s. Merchants were becoming an important part of society at this time. **Generalize** What types of goods were available in European cities in the 1500s?

Life in Towns and Cities

By about 1300, many towns in Western Europe were growing into cities. Paris, with a population greater than 100,000, was one of the largest cities in the world.

The Rise of a Middle Class Town life was not at all like farm or manor life. Towns and cities were not self-sufficient. Instead, their economies were based on the exchange of money for goods and services. A new class of people developed, made up of merchants, traders, and crafts workers. In status, it was between nobles and peasants, and so it was called the *middle class*.



The Role of Guilds In many towns and cities, the merchants, traders, and crafts workers began to form associations called guilds. A guild included all the people who practiced a certain trade or craft. Thus there was a guild of weavers, a guild of grocers, a guild of shoemakers, and so on.

Guilds set prices and prevented outsiders from selling goods in town. They set standards for the quality of their goods. Guild members paid dues. This money was used to help needy members or to support the families of members who had died.

It took a long time to become a member of a guild. Between the ages of 8 and 14, a boy who wanted to learn a certain trade became an apprentice, or unpaid worker being trained in a craft. He lived and worked in the home of a master of that trade for as long as seven years. Then he could become a journeyman, or salaried worker. In time, if guild officials judged that the journeyman's work met their standards, he could join the guild.

◀ **A shield representing the Guild of Notaries, who prepared and verified documents**



Identify Sequence

What were the steps that an apprentice followed in order to become a member of a guild?

Troubadours provided entertainment and preserved traditional tales.

Overcrowding and Disease Medieval towns and cities were extremely crowded. Their lack of sanitation, or procedures for keeping the town clean, bred disease, and the overcrowded conditions meant that disease spread quickly. One disease, the bubonic plague, wiped out one third of Europe's population between 1347 and 1351. Called the Black Death, it was spread by fleas living on the rats that thrived in the unsanitary towns.

✓ **Reading Check** What was the Black Death?



Medieval Culture

Despite its hardships, medieval life was not all a struggle for survival. The growing cities attracted traveling scholars, and young men flocked to cathedral schools. Many of these schools became great centers of learning. Much of the beautiful artwork of the Middle Ages was displayed in churches where many could enjoy it.

Stories, poems, and songs about chivalry were also very popular. **Chivalry** is the code of honorable conduct by which knights were supposed to live. Throughout Western Europe, traveling poets and musicians called **troubadours** went from place to place singing about the brave deeds performed by knights to win the love of a beautiful and worthy woman.

✓ **Reading Check** Describe some advantages of living in a medieval city.



Section 2 Assessment

Key Terms

Review the key terms at the beginning of this section. Use each term in a sentence that explains its meaning.



Target Reading Skill

Identify and list in sequence three events or conditions that led to the growth of towns.

Comprehension and Critical Thinking

1. (a) **Recall** How was the Church important in everyday life?

(b) **Identify Effects** How did this importance contribute to the Church's power?

2. (a) **List** What factors led to the increase in trade in Western Europe?

(b) **Infer** How might the growth of trade have affected the life of an ordinary person?

3. (a) **Define** What were guilds?

(b) **Draw Conclusions** Why would someone join a guild?

4. (a) **Explain** What was chivalry?

(b) **Infer** Why was chivalry a popular topic for troubadours?

Writing Activity

During the Middle Ages, children began apprenticeships as early as the age of eight. Do you think that is too young an age to start such work? Write a paragraph that answers this question.

Writing Tip Begin your paragraph with a topic sentence that tells whether or not you think eight years old is too young. Use supporting sentences to give reasons for your position.